



Dudley Children's Services

WORKFORCE STRATEGY SEPTEMBER 2018 – DECEMBER 2020

Strengthening partnerships with children, families and communities



Introduction

This document sets out the priorities and focus of Dudley's Children's Services workforce development strategy for 2018-2020. The strategy is set within the context of a range of national and local drivers.

It has been informed by the continuous improvement cycle described in the councils Children's Improvement Plan. This includes; feedback from service users, staff, partner agencies, learning from internal and external inspection and audit, as well as responding to actions arising from Serious Case Reviews and national policy.

Workforce reform and development is a major element in improving outcomes for children, young people and families. The ability to continuously improve is intrinsically linked to the quality and capacity of the people who lead, manage, deliver and support those services and how effectively people work together to combine their expertise.

Although the strategy focuses on teams delivering 'core' children's services it has resonance for all staff including those in our Education Outcomes Services and commissioned services all of which are integral to our Learning and Development Offer and are included within the remit of this strategy.

Workforce Vision

Our ambition for our workforce is aligned to our vision for children and families and is set around the same three cornerstones; **Sustainability, Partnerships and Practice.**

We recognise the most important influence in a child's life is family. Children who grow up with safe, stable and nurturing relationships form stronger friendships, develop greater resilience, achieve more in school and are more likely to build positive relationships throughout their lives. We are child focussed in our intent but recognise that the most effective way to help and protect children is to work alongside the whole family. Therefore strengthening families is central to our aims as we know that families have greater capacity for change when we work with them as partners. This is part of an evidence based approach known as **Restorative Practice.**

We aim to embed a culture across our workforce where dignity and respect is the basis for our interventions. Every member of staff will understand the principles of Restorative Practice and its ethos will underpin all of our work and align to the borough vision of **'Forging a Future for all'**.



Aim of the Strategy

This strategy sets out the aspirations for the workforce and professional development programme to achieve this, linking closely to a number of key local and national drivers, which provide focus and form the framework for our vision and aspirations for the workforce and service as a whole.

- Children's Social Care – Chief Officer Plan 2018-2020
- Early Help Strategy 2018-20
- Workforce Survey 2018
- Dudley's Quality Assurance Framework 2017
- Dudley's Audit Framework 2017
- Dudley's Practice Standards 2017
- Dudley's Learning and Development Offer 2018
- Working Together 2018
- Children's Social Care A Vision for Change 2016 DFE

Our workforce is uniquely placed to transform the lives of children and young people. In order to make a difference we all need to play our part in creating a thriving organisational culture. The success of an organisation is the direct result of the people within it.

We have consulted with our staff and our partners and the messages received are clear. We have a shared ambition to make a difference to the lives of the children and families we work with. To succeed in this there needs to be a clear vision, backed by consistent development and support. A place that provides staff, whatever their role, with the tools and working conditions they need to succeed.

This strategy sets out our ambitions for the children's workforce over the next 2 years. It is our commitment to all staff working within Dudley Children's Services.

Local Context

Dudley is a vibrant, multi-cultural borough with strong communities and a wealth of heritage as well as being the historical capital of the Black Country and home of the Black Country Flag. Multi-million pound regeneration plans are underway for Dudley Town centre and with the launch of DY5, Dudley's Business and Innovation Enterprise Zone, as well as a new metro line, there has never been a better time to live and work in Dudley.

Dudley's Children's Services has been on its own journey of improvement and development over the last 2 years following our Ofsted Inspection in 2016. Implementing a Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has strengthened communication and integrated working across the multi-disciplinary teams in Dudley. This was strengthened further by the development and relaunch of our Threshold Guidance and Early Help Strategy in 2018 to ensure children and families are receiving the right services at the appropriate time.

As part of our improvement journey we have developed three specialist teams over the past 18 months to work alongside side our already established teams in Early Help, Duty/ Assessment, Care Management, Children Looked After, Care Leavers, Fostering and Adoption, Independent Reviewing Officers and Residential Children's Homes.

The first of these teams is our Centre for Professional Practice which is our centre of excellence at the heart of Children's Services driving quality assurance, audit and practice improvement to frontline practice.

Secondly we have developed a Court and Care Planning Team who manage all of the care proceedings within the council. The team has been established for over 18 months and have received positive feedback from both Ofsted and the Judiciary for improving performance and outcomes for children.

Finally we have also developed our Adolescent Response Team or ART who sit within Family Solutions and form a key part of Dudley's Early Help Offer. The team offers a needs led intensive package of Family Support predominantly aimed at those young people on the cusp of care. The team are already beginning to make an impact upon the lives of young people and the benefits of this service are starting to be recognised both locally and nationally.

Alongside this, Dudley has delivered a successful Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Programme (ASYE) for the last two years and 90% of our recruits remain working with Dudley.

Dudley is also working as part of a newly established teaching partnership, working jointly with local universities and other local authorities as part of the West Midlands Teaching Partnership to ensure we provide the best opportunities for our Workforce. This has provided opportunities for Practice Educator training and development opportunities for our workforce. Going forward we are also developing our partnerships with the 'Step Up' and "Return to Social Work" programmes and our about to start our own internal programme in 2019 to prepare our social workers for the National Accreditation Programme.

Moving forwards we will continue to develop and we have an ambitious transformation programme where we aim to test different ways of working with vulnerable children building a more sustainable workforce for the future of Dudley's children.

Regional Context

For a number of years, Dudley Councils Children's Social Care services along with their West Midlands colleagues have not been able to recruit a consistent and effective workforce of social workers. This persistent shortfall of capable frontline social workers and social work managers to undertake core safeguarding work has led to a high reliance on agency workers, instability in the workforce and inconsistency in the way social work practice and management is undertaken.

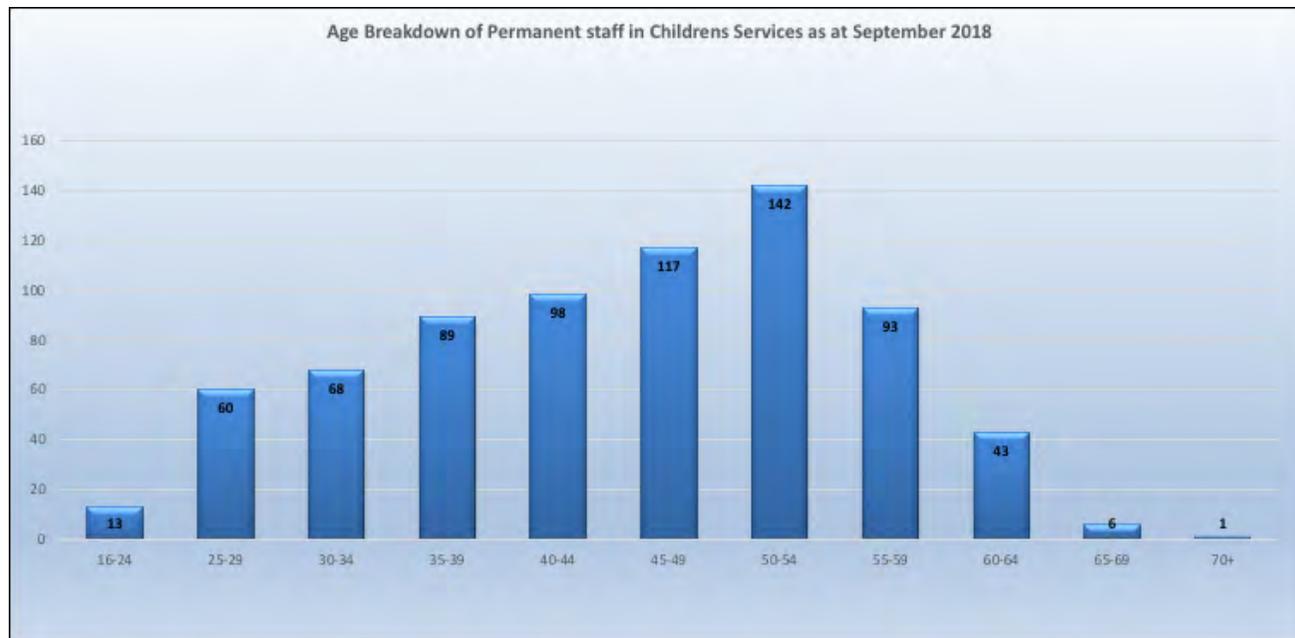
The agency workforce is also subject to regional pressures and fierce competition which continually threatens to destabilise critical frontline services and presents an uncertain base on which to build sustainable improvement. This situation not only creates challenges in terms of providing a high quality service to children and families but also increases the risk that, in the absence of consistent support and case management, children and families needs may escalate. Like with any agency dependent workforce it will always be subject to higher levels of turnover which means that efforts to train and invest in the workforce are constantly undermined by the lack of staff retention.

In response to this the West Midlands ADCS have secured an innovation grant to implement 'Future Social' which is working towards a solution to this problem. 'Future Social' is a collaboration between all 14 Local Authorities/Children's Trusts in the West Midlands region and the Teaching Partnerships being led by the Universities. The intention is to build workforce capacity and quality by working together, pooling resources and capability as appropriate. A small skilled team securing a range of workforce, leadership, practice, recruitment and retention development services for children's services social workers. It will be a strategic partnership between local authorities, training providers including universities and other bodies, such as Frontline. It will provide a strategic approach to ensuring enough high quality social workers in the region for now, building on the work of individual authorities and creating a 'Memorandum of Understanding' where we recruit and retain the best social workers and managers across the region, making the West Midlands the place to develop your social work practice in the United Kingdom.

Workforce Profile

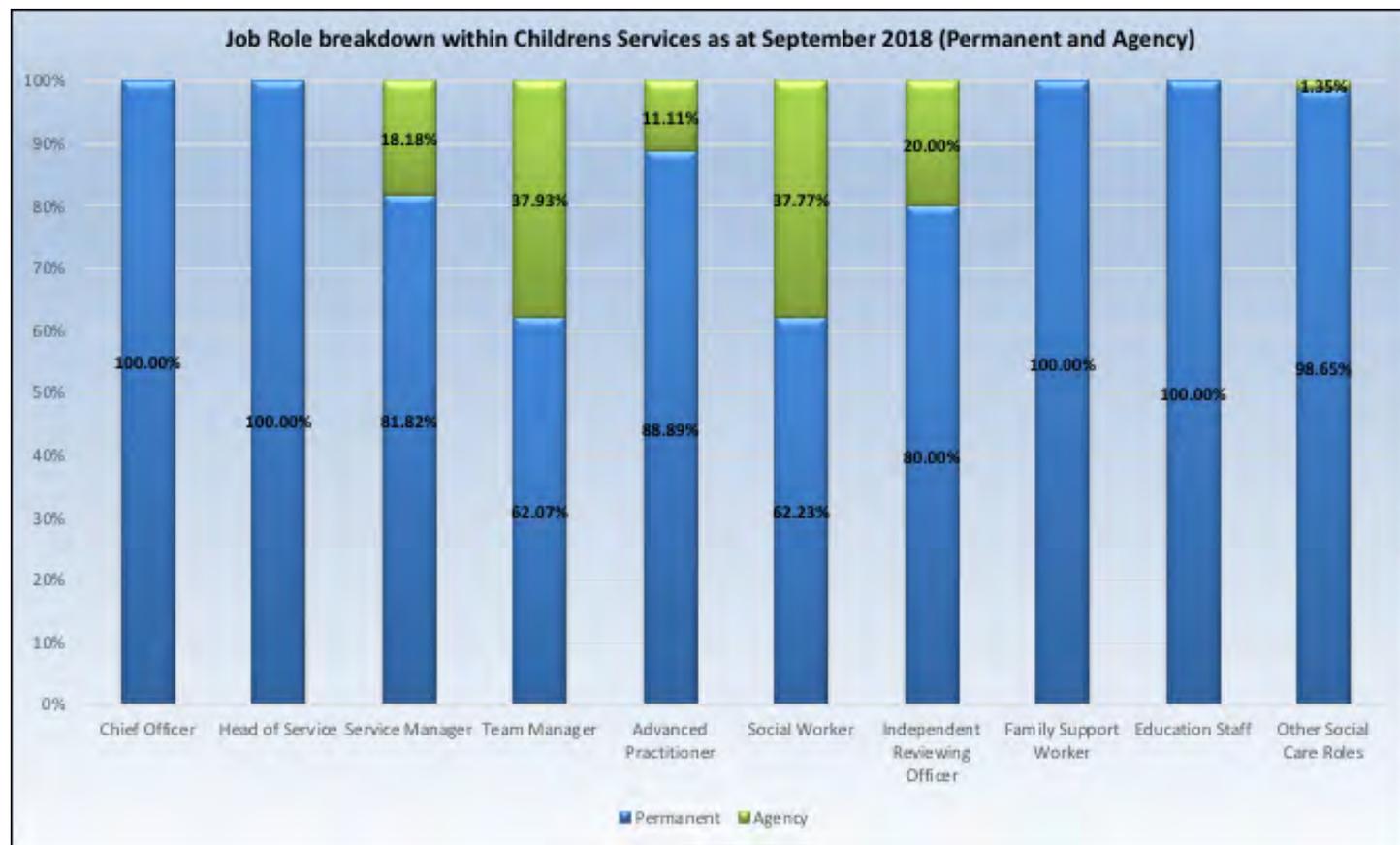
The children's workforce consists of over 700 employees who work either directly with children and families or support the business in other ways.

From the chart below you can see that Dudley's permanent workforce is varied in respect of age with a small percentage of staff falling in the 16-24 age group and an even smaller cohort aged between 65 and 70 plus. The chart highlights that the highest percentage of our workforce fall between the ages 40-59 offering experience and knowledge to our less experienced members of the workforce. We also have a high cohort of staff who fall in the 60-64 age group which means that succession planning will be required to fill these roles due to retirement of this group in the coming years.



The children's social care workforce consists of employees at each level of the system including, Chief Officer, Heads of Service, Service Managers, Team Managers, Advanced Social Work Practitioners and Social Workers at varying levels, Newly Qualified Social workers in the Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's), Family Support Workers, Education Services and other Children's Social Care staff, who may be in Specialist or Support Roles.

Agency rates are a key area of focus and we aim to reduce these as low as possible over the next 12 months. As you can see in the chart some roles have 100% permanent recruitment whereas other roles such as social workers and advanced social workers are more reliant on agency cover at this moment in time. As part of the workforce strategy we are working regionally to ensure where we do need agency workers, they are of the highest quality. The aim is to attract the right people to Dudley, to develop a permanent settled workforce who can provide the best service to children, young people and families.



Our progress so far and our next steps

Our Ofsted inspection of Dudley's arrangement for supporting vulnerable children in early 2016 provided us with a challenging but invaluable insight into where we need to improve and an explicit mandate for positive change and transformation.

Since this date we have been implementing change and creating better conditions for our staff to achieve the best outcomes for the children and families they work with in Dudley.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

There have been seven positive OFSTED monitoring visits

We have introduced a new induction programme and career progression for all staff

We have devised a practitioner's website that allows staff to access everything they need from one location

We have a fully staffed and permanent leadership team in place

The Centre for Professional Practice was established

A comprehensive training programme was launched offering over 70 courses

There has been a reduction in the use of agency staff

Average caseloads for social workers have reduced

We introduced a Children Services Practice Week and held our first staff recognition awards

The Early Help strategy has been launched and has reduced demand for statutory services

Performance indicators are improving across the board

We have developed specialist teams such as the ART and Court and Care Planning Service

Quarterly workforce briefings and weekly briefings facilitated by the Chief Officer

OBJECTIVES:

Improve outcomes for children and families

Implement a new social care system to assist practitioners to be more effective

Train all staff in restorative practice and improve and strength relationships based practice

Develop a specialist team to work with those children at risk of exploitation

Work with the newly formed Teaching Partnership to develop and improve practice

Support in National and Local Programmes to recruit practitioners from Step Up, Frontline and Return to Social Work

Recruit and retain a workforce of proud, skilled and competent professionals

Strengthen and empower Leadership and Management

Prepare social workers and leaders for the national accreditation programme

Link learning & development to Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS)

Develop a learning culture that respects, challenges and supports

Continue to use performance and quality assurance data to measure impact, evaluate and shape practice

Action Plan

SHORT TERM	October 2018 Target	November 2018 Target	January 2019 Target
1. The Chief Officer will be assured that all new staff have completed their induction course and systems training programme	85%	95%	100%
2. Managers will use the new template to record all supervision and management oversight discussions. Percentages of managers using this will be tested via monthly CPP dip sampling	80%	90%	100%
3. No social worker will have caseload over 21	35	25	10
4. We will train our staff in Restorative Practice as part of the Phase 1 delivery	140	210	350
5. We will train Wider Corporate Board and Safeguarding Board Members in the Restorative Practice principals	0%	0%	100%

- January target set to assess natural trend without seasonal variations

LONG TERM	February 2019 Target	July 2019 Target	December 2019 Target
1. Staff will develop through our new career progression programme	5	10	15
2. We will introduce opportunities for 'Step up', Apprenticeships and 'Return to social work' and will aim to recruit a number of practitioners from these programmes during 2019	0	4	6
3. Staff will be trained to use the new fully functioning ICT system and accessible digital platform (This will be completed over a phased process with a percentage of staff trained via stages)	0%	10%	100%
4. All social workers will have received an individual evaluation to endorse them in preparation for the national accreditation	20	75	130
5. A short online quarterly staff survey will be completed to determine staff morale and progress of our plan (A percentage of staff completing the survey will be targeted to ensure a comprehensive sample)	60%	75%	90%

How we will deliver

In order to deliver our ambition there are a series of Key Strategic Initiatives currently underway that are governed, managed and reviewed by the Divisional Management Team. They can be accessed through the Centre for Professional Practice Website.

1. Through our **Transformation Programme**, we aim to test different ways of working with vulnerable children to build a more sustainable workforce.
2. Our **Social Work Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group** will set the specific initiatives we intend to deliver in order to drive appeal of Dudley as a place to work and increase the numbers of permanent Social Workers.
3. Through our Centre for Professional Practice we will embed **The Standards Framework** to make sure every practitioner knows what “good” practice is.
4. The Centre for Professional Practice will set out a clear **Learning and Development Offer** for all staff, which will be tailored to the needs of each service area, based on the learning we have taken through routine evaluation, complaints and stakeholder feedback. It will be supported by a comprehensive and accessible library of resources.
5. Our **Performance Framework** will deliver a fully modernised web based performance information solution to enable management grip and organisational foresight.
6. We know that our systems are cumbersome and much time is wasted duplicating information. To support this we have invested in and will be introducing the **Social Care Systems Replacement Program (SCSR)** that will give us a big opportunity to make our processes leaner.
7. The council are working towards the ambitious target of achieving an excellence rating in the **Workplace Wellbeing Charter**. The charter describes the standards an organisation should meet to support the health and wellbeing of its staff.

Appendix

1. [Learning and Development Offer 2018-2019](#)
2. [Shaping our Future](#)
3. [Training Programme](#)
4. [Restorative Practice Project Plan](#)
5. [Health and Wellbeing](#)



Building stronger and safer communities in...

...the historic capital of the Black Country

